

The Annual Threat Assessment released by the Director of National Intelligence Wednesday correctly dismisses the prospect of widespread violence or a break up of BiH. Unfortunately, the report also contains serious errors of fact and presents a distorted image of the true situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH).

Contrary to the Assessment's assertions, the Government of the Republika Srpska (RS) has not said that it intends to hold a referendum on secession, despite calls from opposition parties to do so. The RS has made clear that it has the right, under the Dayton Agreement, to hold referenda. The topic we have been discussing for a possible referendum should not be a cause for alarm: it can only be in a function of support to the Dayton Agreement and an opposition to anti-Dayton actions, and under no circumstances – not even theoretically – shall it pose a challenge to Dayton or any of its provisions.

The Assessment wrongly assumes that further centralization of Bosnia-Herzegovina's institutions is necessary to make BiH more functional. It ignores the BiH-level institutions now in existence, which include: Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Ministry of Security, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defense (and a single, BiH-level control of the armed forces), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Ministry of Communications and Transport, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, as well as a BiH Parliament and Presidency.

The Government of the RS has stated clearly that it supports EU membership for BiH. As we look at the present members of the EU, Belgium, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, for example, it is not evident that more centralization should be required for Bosnia Herzegovina to qualify. The RS Government maintains its readiness to discuss institutional changes that may eventually be requested by the EU as BiH negotiates EU accession, but the European Union has not yet specified what its conditions will be.

Finally, it is regrettable that the Assessment mischaracterizes the actions of the RS in defending rights it is guaranteed by the Dayton Agreement, including the right to protect its vital interests, as challenges to the international community. The time has come for the international community to recognize that its relentless efforts to impose an overly centralized structure on BiH will not succeed, and to accept that a decentralized structure, but one fully capable of qualifying BiH for EU entry, is the best guarantee of prosperity and stability in this region.

- Milorad Dodik
Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska

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